



**SCHOOL:** Rocky Boy Elementary  
**FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR:** Paula LaMere  
**EXPANDING BREAKFAST PROGRAM:** Free Breakfast in the Classroom

## ★ BACKGROUND

Although 87 percent of Rocky Boy's student body qualifies for free or reduced cost lunch, until last year only 40 percent were taking advantage of breakfast offered before school.

## ★ IMPLEMENTATION

Hot breakfasts in the classroom? That's what Rocky Boy Elementary students and staff wanted, and School Food Service Director Paula LaMere rose to the challenge. When she instituted a free Breakfast in the Classroom program in 2008, early feedback indicated that students and staff preferred traditional hot breakfasts to prepackaged items. Now 90-95 percent of the students eat breakfast. Carts with insulated bags and containers deliver individual plates of foods to each student. Menus include scrambled eggs, toast and fruit. Oatmeal, yogurt and fresh fruit. Ham, hash browns, toast and fresh fruit. Waffle, sausage patty and fresh fruit. Lowfat milk is served daily and 100 percent fruit juice once a week. LaMere noticed that when both milk and fruit juice are offered, students often decline milk, and recognizing that milk provides nutrients these kids need, she limits juice to once a week.

LaMere used staff orientation days to introduce the program and its logistics. Each classroom receives a garbage bag for breakfast trash, which is then set outside door. The custodian finds picking up the bagged breakfast trash easier than cleaning the entire cafeteria.

## ★ IMPACT

"Students love it," says LaMere. "When students see me, they always ask 'what's for breakfast tomorrow?'" This is such a great program. I know students need the good food, the nutritional benefits and the breakfast gets them ready to learn. I'll continue to push this program because it is so good for the students. This successful program proves I'm doing my job."

Principal Josephine Corcoran notes that the program works well. Because all students receive a healthy breakfast, being hungry isn't a contributing factor to behavioral issues. Classroom breakfast provides a calm setting for eating. Students seem more willing to try new foods and are more focused on eating rather than running out to play.

## ★ WORDS OF ADVICE

Breakfast in the Classroom is a great program that benefits students. I encourage anyone to do it. As a Provision 2 school, universal free breakfast makes financial sense. Reimbursement nearly doubled because of the increased participation. LaMere said, "We're serving so many more students with little extra cost."